

for, that the additional contribution that would go from the employees and the employer is to fund an early retirement benefit that is also provided for in the bill. Why should we deny the employees of a system an increased benefit that has already been paid for? That is part of the issue. The second issue is if we can provide a greater benefit, why shouldn't we? What are we squirreling it away for? What are we going to do with it? These folks have paid the money in. If it can provide them an extra benefit, I frankly see no harm in doing that at all and would urge you to oppose Senator Beutler's amendment. We will be discussing a variety of other issues as we go along, but this one in particular by increasing the benefit through the annuity factor I think makes sense. It's already been paid for in the system. I see no reason to screw down the retirement systems to the absolute minimum that we think people could live on or provide for themselves with. That should not be an objective of the retirement systems. I am also a little bit...the suggestion that a change in one system can have a ripple effect in another system is certainly true, and I'm cognizant of that and in fact, if you all want to examine your green books you'll see that there is a bill pending before you, LB 130, that would indeed increase the annuity factor for...

SPEAKER WITHEM: One minute.

SENATOR WICKERSHAM: ...the school retirement system. That is applicable outside of Omaha and guess what? The school boards have agreed to that as a part of a number of systemic changes that we would propose this body make in not only the school retirement system, but the other retirement systems as well and hopefully that legislation will come to you in the future. The school boards, the people who are responsible for raising a portion of the funds to create the additional benefit in the school retirement system are in favor of it, as is the Omaha School Board in favor of LB 505. Those are the people who are on the front line in providing these benefits in conjunction with the teachers who also contribute. I don't frankly understand in part why we would substitute our judgment and why we would attempt to reduce benefits that have already been paid for...

SPEAKER WITHEM: Time. Senator Beutler.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Withem, members of the Legislature, I think there are responses to everything that Senator Wickersham